



**City of Santa Barbara**  
Community Development Department

**Memorandum**

**DATE:** October 13, 2011

**TO:** Browning Allen, Transportation & Parking Manager  
Downtown Parking Committee

**FROM:** Marck Aguilar, Redevelopment Supervisor  
Elizabeth Limón, Redevelopment Specialist

**SUBJECT:** Plaza de la Guerra Infrastructure Improvement Project

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**RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff is requesting comments from the Downtown Parking Committee regarding the parking space designations proposed as part of the Plaza de la Guerra Infrastructure Improvement Project. The Plaza is part of a large parcel that includes Storke Placita, the Plaza U-Road, City Hall and the City Hall parking lot (Attachment 1).

**BACKGROUND:**

In 2004, Council directed Redevelopment Agency staff to pursue conceptual design of infrastructure improvements for Plaza de la Guerra. The firm of Campbell & Campbell was contracted to develop a design and in November 2006, staff returned to Council with concept illustrations to request clarification on the priority of certain elements. Council reconsidered the design parameters and directed staff to return with a more comprehensive concept.

In late 2007, a broader concept design involving significant parking reduction, changes to De la Guerra Street and to the parking orientation between State and Santa Barbara Streets was presented to City Boards, City Commissions and community groups. Overall reaction reflected very strong concern about the loss of parking, street circulation changes and potential project cost. The possibility of an increase in the number of Plaza events and effect on surrounding businesses was raised as a programming issue.

In response, Staff was asked to develop a concept more limited in scope that would be responsive to the original direction and would address concerns raised during the 2007 public process. Subsequently, the 2009 concept design was developed which reduced the project scope while still addressing many of the concerns raised. The 2009 concept

plan design responded to the Council's desire to improve the Plaza while maintaining its character. It also addressed Council's charge for safe interaction between pedestrians and automobiles. Additionally, the plan addressed concerns expressed by the local business community through the Downtown Organization. The 2009 Concept Plan was declared a project for environmental review on November 24, 2009.

## **2011 CONCEPT PLAN – KEY ELEMENTS**

A few of the more notable design elements in the 2011 Concept Plan include:

- Lowering the lawn area to be flush with the road surface. This will increase the plaza area available to community events as it eliminates the curb around the lawn. Removable bollards would separate the lawn from the road surface.
- Widening the sidewalk along the westerly (restaurants) side of the Plaza to better accommodate pedestrians. The sidewalk would retain a curb to separate it from the roadway.
- Reducing the Plaza lawn and landscaping area from approximately 17,300 square feet to approximately 10,700 square feet to accommodate the wider sidewalk and replacing some lawn area with permeable pavers.
- Improving pedestrian pathways and addressing the narrow exit from the Plaza U-Road resulting in a net loss of five (5) parking spaces in the project area. One new parking space will be added along De la Guerra Street for a net loss of 4 spaces.
- Replace the roadway with new concrete.
- Relocation of the tented electrical panel off of the lawn area.
- Replacement of the existing trees due to age and condition.
- Strengthening the visual connection between the Plaza and Casa de la Guerra through relocation of the existing flagpoles, stone monument and removal of the agapanthus.

## **PROPOSED CHANGES TO PARKING DESIGNATIONS IN THE PROJECT AREA**

Attachment 2 is a chart providing existing and proposed parking statistics for the project area. The parking statistics are shown separately for the Plaza U-Road and De la Guerra Street as well as combined totals. Attachment 3 is a graphic display of the existing parking conditions in the project area. Attachment 4 is a graphic display of the proposed parking conditions.

The proposed project would reduce the number of spaces in the Plaza U-Road area from 35 to 30 spaces. Two spaces are proposed to be eliminated at the U-Road exit in front of City Hall to improve emergency vehicle access. Three spaces are proposed to be eliminated near Storke Placita to improve the visual and pedestrian connection to

State Street. The proposed parking configuration would add one space along De la Guerra Street near the Plaza for a total of 24 spaces.

The project would also propose to change the parking designation for the two spaces located on De la Guerra Street across from Casa de la Guerra (in between the U-Road entry and exit). Currently these two spaces are painted yellow for commercial loading. Often large trucks will use this loading area and can create a visual barrier for viewing the Plaza from De la Guerra Street and Casa de la Guerra. The proposal is to convert these 2 loading spaces to 15-minute (green) parking spaces and extend the existing yellow loading on the south side of De la Guerra nearest to State Street.

### **U-Road Interior Parking Spaces**

During public comment at City Council and the Historic Landmarks Commission in August, questions were raised about how the parking spaces along the interior curb were added across from City Hall where the U-road exits. The issue was also raised at the Planning Commission's scoping hearing for the Environmental Impact Report (EIR). It was stated that the parking spaces along the interior curb cause the Plaza lawn area to feel closed in and confined. When these spaces did not exist, the Plaza had a more open feeling and was more frequently used during the day. Attachment 3 shows these 8 spaces in green on the left side of the U-Road in front of City Hall.

### **Commercial Loading**

At a recent meeting of the Government Relations Committee of the Downtown Organization, a question was raised about the number of yellow commercial loading spaces in the project area (three along the Plaza U-Road and five along De la Guerra Street). Questions were raised as to whether that many commercial loading spaces were needed in the Plaza U-Road since so few businesses actually front only on the plaza. Specifically, it has been suggested that the two loading zones along the U-Road entry be combined and reduced.

### **Downtown Parking Committee Review**

Staff is looking for input from the Downtown Parking Committee on the parking changes proposed for the project area. This will be an early concept review by the committee. No formal action on the project will occur until completion of the EIR process which is anticipated the Summer or early Fall 2012. If and when the EIR is certified by the Planning Commission, staff will return to the Downtown Parking Committee for a formal recommendation on the proposed parking changes in the Plaza de la Guerra area.

Attachments:

1. Plaza de la Guerra Parcel
2. Parking Statistics Chart
3. Existing Parking & Circulation
4. Proposed Parking & Circulation

# Plaza de la Guerra Parcel



## PARKING STATISTICS

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### EXISTING PARKING SUMMARY

<u>BICYCLE PARKING</u>	–	(10) BIKE SPACES
<u>DE LA GUERRA PLAZA:</u>		
15 MIN. – 75 MIN. PARKING	–	(31) SPACES
LOADING / UNLOADING PARKING	–	(3) SPACES
ACCESSIBLE (HC) PARKING	–	(1) SPACE
<u>PLAZA PARKING</u>	–	<u>(35) SPACES TOTAL</u>
<u>DE LA GUERRA STREET:</u>		
15 MIN. – 75 MIN. PARKING	–	(18) SPACES
LOADING / UNLOADING PARKING	–	(5) SPACES
<u>STREET PARKING</u>	–	<u>(23) SPACES TOTAL</u>
<u>TOTAL COMBINED EXISTING PARKING</u>	–	<u>(58) SPACES</u>

### PROPOSED PARKING SUMMARY

<u>BICYCLE PARKING</u>	–	(12) BIKE SPACES
<u>DE LA GUERRA PLAZA:</u>		
15 MIN. – 75 MIN. PARKING	–	(24) SPACES
LOADING / UNLOADING PARKING	–	(4) SPACES
ACCESSIBLE (HC) PARKING	–	(2) SPACES
<u>PLAZA SPACES</u>	–	<u>(30) SPACES TOTAL</u>
<u>DE LA GUERRA STREET:</u>		
15 MIN. – 75 MIN. PARKING	–	(21) SPACES
LOADING / UNLOADING PARKING	–	(3) SPACES
<u>STREET SPACES</u>	–	<u>(24) SPACES TOTAL</u>
<u>TOTAL COMBINED PROPOSED PARKING</u>	–	<u>(54) SPACES</u>





